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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 000247

SIPDIS

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STATE PASS HHS FOR SECRETARY LEAVITT AND OFFICE OF GLOBAL
HEALTH AFFAIRS (STEIGER AND CORREA-DE-ARAUJO)
MCA FOR AMBASSADOR DANILOVICH
DEPT FOR WHA A/S SHANNON, WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/29/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [NU](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: SECRETARY LEAVITT,S MEETING WITH PANAMANIAN VICE
PRESIDENT LEWIS AND HEALTH MINISTER ALLEYNE

Classified By: Ambassador Paul A. Trivelli. Reasons 1.4 (B,D).

11. (C) Summary: On January 9, 2007, the U.S. Presidential
Delegation (Presdel), led by Health and Human Services (HHS)
Secretary Michael Leavitt, discussed with Panamanian Vice
President Samuel Lewis and Health Minister Camilo Alleyne a
new regional health-care training initiative. Alleyne
reiterated his Government's commitment to the initiative and
offered to assist with the drafting of a Memorandum of
Understanding (MOU) and other deliberations. Vice President
Lewis conveyed his interest in a Millennium Challenge Account
(MCA) program for his country, even though he recognizes
Panama's GDP exceeds the eligibility threshold. End Summary.

GOP is Ready for Health Initiative

12. (SBU) Secretary Leavitt outlined his vision for the new
regional health initiative, whose centerpiece is a regional
training facility in Panama that will train hundreds of
health workers from the region -- in particular nurses,
technicians, community health workers and other health
providers from rural areas. He thanked Vice President Lewis
and Health Minister Alleyne for the Panamanian Government's
(GOP) support for the initiative. An enthused Alleyne
replied that he is "ready to begin," noting the proposed site
for the training academy, a hospital at the former Howard Air
Force Base in the reverted Canal Zone, will be readily
accessible and could even offer specialized surgery. He
shared he had discussed the initiative with his Nicaraguan
counterpart, incoming Health Minister Maritza Quant, who was
receptive. Alleyne added that Panama has already recruited a
group of indigenous medical students to start training
shortly. He next referred to the GOP's desire to use the
project to help Panama achieve its United Nations Millennium
Development goals.

13. (SBU) The Secretary described the next steps in the
program: drafting an MOU, visiting the participating
countries, and possibly signing the agreement in a regional
venue. Alleyne offered to help draft the MOU and to
undertake additional activities to facilitate negotiations
and prompt implementation. He promised to send his input on
the text of the MOU to the Secretary by late January. He
suggested a team from Central American Health Ministries then

travel to Washington to negotiate the MOU with Secretary Leavitt and his team. The Secretary thanked Alleyne for his offer and suggested that, following the Washington meeting, he could travel to the region in the March 15-April 15 timeframe to finalize the document and promote the program. To the Secretary's query regarding a venue to launch the health initiative, Lewis suggested the Organization of American States meeting of Heads of State in Panama in June 2007, or perhaps during the System of Integration of Central America meeting, to be held in Belize in the spring.

We Want MCC Too

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¶4. (SBU) Vice President Lewis almost rhetorically noted Panama's desire to participate in a MCA program and asserted Panama's GDP does not reflect the reality that 40 percent of Panama's population is poor. (Note: Panama's income per capita well exceeds the eligibility threshold for MCC assistance. End Note.)

¶5. (U) Participants:

Panama:

Vice President Samuel Lewis

Minister of Health Camilo Alleyne

Panamanian Ambassador to Nicaragua Miguel Lecaro

Minister of Foreign Affairs Advisor Demetrio Olacirequi

U.S.:

Secretary Michael Leavitt

MCC CEO John Danilovich

Assistant Secretary Tom Shannon

Ambassador Paul Trivelli

HHS Special Assistant to the Secretary for International

Affairs William Steiger

USAID Director Alex Dickie

USAID Health and Education Director Connie Johnson

MCA-N Country Director Matt Bohn

Political Counselor/notetaker Victoria Alvarado

¶6. (U) This cable was cleared by Secretary Leavitt, MCC CEO Ambassador Danilovich, and Department of State A/S Shannon.

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